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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Fifty-first session

REPORT OF THE EIGHTEENTH MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
(5 - 7 July 2000)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The meeting was opened by the Chairman of the Executive Committee, His Excellency, Ambassador Raimundo Pérez-Hernández y Torra (Spain). His Excellency, Ambassador Ali Khorram, Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee, chaired agenda items 4 to 6(i).

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND THE REPORT OF THE SEVENTEENTH MEETING

2. The agenda (EC/50/SC/CRP.15) was adopted without revision. The *Draft Report of the Seventeenth Meeting of the Standing Committee* (EC/50/SC/CRP.13) was adopted with one amendment to the Decision on Annual Programme Budget (EC/50/SC/CRP.13, Annex II, para. C(f)(i)). This will be reflected in the final report of the meeting (A/AC.96/929).

III. STATEMENTS OF THE DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER AND THE ASSISTANT HIGH COMMISSIONER

3. The Deputy High Commissioner gave a brief opening statement, emphasizing areas where the Office was achieving positive results. The Assistant High Commissioner then presented delegations with an update on recent developments in UNHCR's operations around the world. In addition, he described the Office's involvment in situations of internally displaced persons, outlining the parameters of this involvement. He also described UNHCR's recently restructured Emergency Response Section at Headquarters, including it's new responsibilities for activities related to security in refugee or returnee populated areas.

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IV. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

4. In her opening remarks, which also served to introduce the Note on International Protection, the Director of the Department of International Protection drew attention to the inter-relationship between the content of the three papers presented this year, noting that the encompassing theme of making protection effective was an important element in each. The Director reached the conclusion, after a brief review of global developments, that refugee protection is at a crossroads in this millennium year. This led to her proposing a process of globally-based consultations with senior government experts and refugee protection experts on areas where the interpretation of the international refugee instruments is disputed and, more generally, on areas where the international protection regime would need to be developed progressively to adequately cover all refugee protection needs, with a view to identifying the scope, content and nature of international protection in such situations. She characterized the consultations as revolving around three concentric circles, with the undisputed fundamental principles set out in the 1951 Convention at its heart, interpretive questions surrounding that core, and the "gaps" surrounding that.

A. Note on International Protection

5. In introducing the *Note on International Protection* (EC/50/SC/CRP.16, the Director pointed out that its format and theme is different from those of the past. Rather than focusing on failures and omissions in international protection of refugees, the current Note was described as focusing on the positive activities undertaken over the past year by UNHCR to operationalize protection, thereby making protection effective. In describing these activities, a detailed conceptual framework of international protection was highlighted as being included in the Note.

6. This action-oriented approach was welcomed by many delegations. In this context, some delegations commented that the protection of women, children and the elderly warranted greater operational focus, while others noted that other particular groups, such as the disabled and adolescents, should also receive special attention. An observer delegation, speaking on behalf of the NGOs, expressed concern over the trend of adopting restrictive approaches towards refugee protection and called on the Office to strongly condemn this practice.

7. In response to questions and comments, the Director provided further information on a wide variety of protection activities raised by delegations, ranging from implementation of the Action for the Rights of Children (ARC) project worldwide through protection staffing, partnerships to enhance protection and action to address domestic violence to resettlement and statelessness activities.

B. Note on Interception

8. Deputy Director in the Department of International Protection introduced the conference room paper on interception of asylum-seekers and refugees (EC/50/SC/CRP.17), noting the relationship between this topic and the overriding theme of making protection effective. This issue was described as one which illustrates particularly well the interface between migration control concerns and asylum imperatives. The Deputy Director also emphasized

that the practice of interception has wide-reaching implications, including in countries of origin, countries of first asylum, countries of transit and countries of intended destination.

9. Acknowledging the relationship between migration and asylum issues, a number of delegations stressed the need to maintain a balance between immigration control and refugee protection. Some delegations underlined the distinction between movements from countries of origin and secondary movements from countries of first asylum. It was cautioned that it must not, however, be assumed that secondary movements are always from countries where effective protection is available. The fact that illegal migration undermines public confidence in asylum systems was recognized by a number of delegations.

10. There was also concern expressed, primarily by the NGO community, that appropriate interception safeguards need to be in place to protect refugees and asylum-seekers, particularly children. Appreciation for opening the debate on this topic and enthusiasm for an early conclusion on it by some delegations was tempered by caution and the need for consultation on the part of others. It was also noted that the issue is a new and developing one, and the view was expressed that the Executive Committee pronouncements on it might better wait for outcome of the meeting to consider the Protocols to the Convention on Transnational Crime to be held in Vienna.

C. Note on Complementary Forms of Protection

11. The Chief of the Department's Standards and Legal Advice Section introduced the note on complementary protection, stressing the need for such forms of protection to be harmonized between States, consistent with the principles of both refugee law and international human rights law.

12. Many delegations confirmed the distinction between temporary protection as a response to situations of mass influx and complementary forms of protection, offered after an individual determination of protection needs. Others agreed that there should be one single determination procedure for all protection cases. While a number of delegations endorsed the view expressed in the paper that harmonization on this topic would be helpful, others expressed the concern that harmonization might lead to a lack of flexibility for States in fashioning protection responses to particular situations. Even those in favour of harmonization expressed concern that harmonized standards should not be at the lowest common denominator, but should reflect reasonable minimum standards. It was suggested by one delegation, and endorsed by several others, that this topic, which was widely viewed as complex and multifaceted, was one that would benefit from further consideration during the process consultations on the draft conclusion on international protection to be adopted by the Executive Committee at its plenary session in October 2000.

V. PROGRAMME AND FUNDING

A. Overall programme and funding projections for 2000

13. Introducing this item, both the Director a.i. of the Division of Operational Support and the Head of Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization Service (DRRM) drew attention to the projections contained in conference room

paper EC/SC/50/CRP.19. The situation in the first year of the unified budget gave rise for concern. As of 30 June 2000, only 41 per cent of requirements were met. This left a projected shortfall of some $ 125 million between estimated income for the year and revised requirements. The Head of DRRM acknowledged with appreciation the adjustments made by a number of donors to the requirements of the unified budget, notably ensuring early announcement and payment of contributions and limited earmarking of funds made available. The expected shortfall would have serious implications for operations, and colleagues had been asked to limit expenditures to activities considered to be a high priority. He urged delegations to pay their pledges as soon as possible since cash on hand would only cover operations through mid-August.

14. Several delegations echoed this concern in their statements, urging UNHCR to be realistic in its financial management. Some delegations encouraged the Office to focus more specifically on its core activities and on the coordination of emergency preparedness, and disengage from other activities not directly linked to its mandate. A number of delegations also stressed the importance of broadening the donor base and achieving greater efficiency in the management of its programmes in order to enhance credibility in a competitive environment. Several delegations also asked how priorities were set, notably between regions.

15. At the invitation of the Chairman, the Standing Committee considered two draft decisions on mobilizing resources for a unified budget (Pledging Conference) and on guiding principles applicable to the resourcing UNHCR's unified budget. The Chairman recalled that both these issues had been the subject of informal consultations.

16. In their statements, delegations expressed their support for both these draft decisions. In the case of the Pledging Conference (EC/50/SC/CRP.14), one delegation proposed that a study of the constraints resulting from varying fiscal years should be undertaken, offering its support. Support was also expressed for the idea of strengthening the link between the Global Appeal and the Pledging Conference. One delegation urged for quick action on this issue. Another delegation also insisted on the need for a more thorough examination of the Annual Programme budget at the time of the Executive Committee.

17. The guiding principles on resource mobilization (EC/50/SC/CRP.22) were welcomed by delegations as a useful first step, providing a reference framework for donors and UNHCR. It was pointed out that the principles would need to be reviewed in the course of the year, in accordance with the proposal contained in the text. Several delegations looked forward to maintaining and increasing the dialogue on the budget as a regular feature of the work of the Standing Committee.

18. Responding to the various issues and concerns raised by delegations, the Assistant High Commissioner explained that the prioritization exercise already carried out earlier in the year had led to a substantial downward revision of estimated requirements, and that there would be a further detailed review in August based on programme implementation, as part of UNHCR's monitoring of operations. Unless substantial new contributions were forthcoming, further cuts would be inevitable. In concluding the Committee's discussions under this agenda item two draft decisions were adopted (Annex).

Americas

19. Presenting an update of UNHCR's objectives and activities in this region, the Director of the Americas Bureau outlined the protection and solutions strategy devised by the Bureau to cover the diverse situations faced by UNHCR in the region. The three key components of the strategy are to ensure an adequate legal framework, facilitate the establishment of national institutions for refugee protection and local integration, and to build civil society "protection networks. Progress made in the context of PARinAC and mainstreaming of a gender approach were also emphasized.

20. In the discussions that followed, many delegations expressed their support for the various components of this strategy, notably the development of social networks which play an important role in support of protection activities. A number of delegations from the region described specific measures being taken for this purpose.

21. Several delegations warmly welcomed the recent ratification by Mexico of the international refugee instruments and the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. There were also expressions of support for new resettlement opportunities being offered, particularly by countries in southern South America. These were seen as examples for the world of international solidarity and burden-sharing.

22. Several delegations referred to the situation in Colombia, welcoming UNHCR's efforts to address the situation of Colombians in need of protection in neighbouring countries as well as in Colombia itself. The progressive consolidation of UNHCR's presence in the sub-region to better respond to the evolution of the Colombian situation was also welcomed. They also underscored the need for UNHCR to closely coordinate its action with other international organizations. One observer delegation, representing NGOs drew attention to the precarious situation prevailing in southern Colombia, and urged UNHCR to work closely with the neighbouring countries in view of the risks of negative reaction to cross border flows which were likely to occur.

23. In his response, the Director of the Americas Bureau acknowledged the encouragement and support expressed in the course of the debate for UNHCR's strategy in the region. As regards UNHCR's action in Colombia, he insisted on the complementarity of efforts underlying the measures taken, and referred to a recent meeting with the International Committee of the Red Cross. The current challenge facing the Office was to transfer interagency cooperation to the field level. He recalled that sub-offices in Colombia had only just opened, enabling UNHCR to initiate the critical local level component of the programme. He also referred to contingency planning by governments in the Andean region which UNHCR was facilitating. Joint planning with NGOs was also an important feature of these efforts.

Asia and the Pacific

24. In his oral strategic presentation, the Director of the Asia and the Pacific Bureau focused on events unfolding in West Timor, Indonesia which could have serious implications on the Office's efforts to bring about voluntary repatriation and provide assistance to refugees. He read out a report received earlier in the day from West Timor describing the tension between the local population and refugees. He noted that the current state

of affairs could have been avoided if the authorities had taken determined action to pursue the commitments made in October 1999. The Director went on to provide updates on UNHCR's activities in Northern Rakhine State in Myanmar, the situation of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal and the status of the Asia Pacific Consultations (APC).

25. Several delegations took the floor and expressed appreciation for the work of UNHCR staff in tackling the many challenges in the region. One delegation encouraged the Office to pursue repatriation and provide protection to returning Myanmar refugees. Another delegation thanked UNHCR for its recent effort to resolve the Bhutanese refugee problem and expressed hope that the process of returnee verification would start in the near future. The Office was also encouraged to continue to reinforce its protection activities in Thailand. On the APC process, it was hoped that refugee protection would remain high on its agenda. The Office was advised to continue to closely monitor developments in the region and the opening of a UNHCR office in Port Moresby was welcomed.

26. Concern was expressed over delays in deploying experienced staff to West Timor at the beginning of the crises, as well as with delays in implementing the shelter programme in East Timor. One delegation urged UNHCR to conclude it's operations in East Timor, while continuing to pursue voluntary repatriation and local settlement in West Timor. The NGO observer delegation voiced concern that not enough was done to separate militia members from refugees in the camps and called on the Indonesian Government to ensure the security of refugees and humanitarian personnel. UNHCR's continued presence was considered essential to monitor this situation.

27. Conveying his government's desire for UNHCR to continue promoting the self-sufficiency of urban refugees in India, one delegation drew attention to a reference in the 1999 Global Report which stated that such efforts were being hindered by administrative problems. It was noted that there had been no change in the government's policy toward urban refugees and that none would be deported without due process. He stated that his Government was aware that a national law on refugees was long overdue and was considering the requisite legislation. On the situation in Sri Lanka's Jaffna Peninsula, it was noted that it was impossible to carry out voluntary repatriation in the current circumstances. UNHCR was encouraged to continue to pursue its work in Sri Lanka.

28. In addressing the issues raised, the Director informed delegations that in East Timor, the High Commissioner had decided to end UNHCR's assistance activities by mid-2001. A small presence would be maintained for returnee monitoring purposes beyond that date. With regard to reconstruction activities, UNHCR had been assigned the task of providing 35,000 housing units to returnees. The Director expressed the hope that development agencies would come forward and assume responsibility for additional shelter needs. In relation to UNHCR's operation in West Timor, he expressed cautious optimism that the current state of uncertainty would yield positive developments, including the possibility for large-scale voluntary repatriation. He informed delegations that UNHCR would remain engaged in West Timor to continue its refugee repatriation operation and assist with local settlement.

Europe

29. In a brief opening statement, the Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe emphasized the importance of asylum policies in Europe for the rest of the world, since they are perceived as setting global standards. He expressed concern that asylum and refugee issues are increasingly seen from a migration control perspective. While UNHCR does not underestimate the migration challenges confronting European States, its main priority was to strengthen asylum throughout Europe. He also described the strategic directions being followed by the Office to achieve this goal, and described the efforts underway to address the needs of those displaced by conflicts in the Caucasus region, including from Chechenya, Russian Federation. He concluded by informing delegations that, with diminished financial resources, several programmes were now facing severe constraints and risked being suspended.

30. Several delegations welcomed UNHCR's contribution to efforts to develop comprehensive migration and asylum policies, commending the cooperative attitude shown towards governments. Reference was made to the need for continued efforts to develop adequate legislation in Eastern Europe. One delegation gave an account of a colloquium on the theme of reconciliation recently organised in Spain, bringing together a wide range of experts. A number of practical recommendations had emerged from this meeting, both on preventive action and on specific aspects of reconciliation.

31. An observer delegation, speaking on behalf of the NGOs, expressed strong support for UNHCR's activities in Europe and its strenuous efforts to ensure high standards in refugee protection. He drew particular attention to the risk that a harmonization of asylum policies in Europe could result in weakening the entire system, if based on an incorrect interpretation of the 1951 Convention. The observer delegation recalled that the European Union Summit on refugee policy, held in Tampere in 1999, had reaffirmed the right to asylum and that a comprehensive and coordinated approach was needed. He also drew attention to the dangers inherent in recent proposals for a "regionalized" approach to protection.

32. Under this agenda item, the Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee gave an account of his visit to Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan, what he had seen, and the specific concerns he had discussed with the authorities in these countries, as well as with other United Nations agencies, donors and refugees. This mission had provided a useful insight into the complex challenges of the situations in these countries, and led him to some observations and conclusions on the difficult work being undertaken by UNHCR. Delegations from these countries noted his report with appreciation. They called for the continued support of the international community through additional resources, and by their assistance in finding political solutions. One delegation also referred to current efforts to help the displaced in the North Caucasus, expressing gratitude for the assistance provided by the international community, and confirming that displaced persons in the area should not be forced to return to their homes in Chechnya. The delegation also strongly recommended continuing the process started by the 1996 CIS Conference.

33. Responding to comments and questions raised by delegations, the Director confirmed that a letter of agreement had been signed recently by the High

Commissioner with the European Commissioner of Justice and Home Affairs in the context of the asylum harmonization process which would include consultations with UNHCR. He emphasized the importance of the work at regional level of the Humanitarian Issues Working Group (HIWG). This was a useful mechanism which could help reduce pressures leading to migratory flows. It must not, however, result in blocking the access of refugees to European countries. He also recalled that an important meeting was to take place later in July 2000, on follow-up to the CIS Conference which was now entering a new phase primarily focused on issues of asylum and migration.

South-Eastern Europe

34. Opening the discussion, the High Commissioner's Special Envoy in the region provided an overview of the humanitarian effort in Kosovo, focusing on the achievements of the past year. He outlined the ongoing challenges of minority protection, noting the progress which had been made in this area by international agencies, in particular the initiative with Roma and Albanian leaders. On the transition to reconstruction and rehabilitation, he emphasized the need for continued support to the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to avoid any uncovered areas or gaps. The Special Envoy paid tribute to the work of UNHCR's dedicated staff living and working under difficult circumstances in the region.

35. The Coordinator of the South-Eastern Europe Operation summarized the positive developments with respect to the return of refugees in the post-Dayton context, noting the obstacles and areas where action was still required. He highlighted the need for greater donor support for reconstruction, in particular housing, and for UNHCR's programmes. He also outlined UNHCR's efforts to develop national asylum systems and procedures in the region.

36. Delegations commended the Office on its work in the region and the success of humanitarian efforts in Kosovo that had been implemented under difficult conditions. General support was voiced for the transition from the humanitarian relief to longer term initiatives in Kosovo and UNHCR's focus on protection activities. UNHCR and UNMIK were urged to ensure that all gaps were filled and no vulnerable groups were left unprotected in the transition process. UNHCR's Roma initiative was described as a promising example of what might be achieved in the area of reconciliation. It was also suggested that violence against minorities might be reduced if those guilty of atrocities were brought to justice.

37. Concern was expressed regarding the timing of returns of Kosovar Albanians to Kosovo from Western Europe, given the difficult conditions many were returning to. States were called on to reconsider the pace of returns. One delegation asked what concrete steps can be taken by States to improve the situation, in addition to what was already being implemented on the ground.

38. Progress in the implementation of the Kosovo Women's Initiative and the impact it was having on the lives of women was welcomed. It was suggested that an evaluation of this and other women's initiatives more generally be undertaken, as well as an analysis of lessons learned from Kosovo in such areas as security, protection, policing, etc. The Office was urged to continue to demonstrate that the recommendations of the Kosovo evaluation are

being implemented. Pledges of financial support for additional activities which UNHCR might developed in order to fill gaps in its' emergency capacity, following the Kosovo evaluation, were given by several delegations.

39. With regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, the positive developments regarding return possibilities were welcomed. It was emphasized that continued political pressure was required to ensure that they continued. One delegation stressed that political pressure to ensure respect for the right to return must not weaken and the need for humanitarian assistance to be provided to all in need in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia irrespective of their political affiliation was emphasized.

40. In responding to delegations, the Special Envoy indicated that security was the starting point for minority returns. He emphasized that there was a need for a better "rule of law" package in Kosovo. International judges, prosecutors, and others are needed to build the legal and judicial system so that ethnic crime could be prosecuted. Closely linked was the need to more vigorously address the issue of the detained and missing in Belgrade. He stated that more inter-ethnic dialogue was also necessary at the political, local and community levels. Governments were encouraged to look at the whole spectrum of these interlinked issues in their efforts to enhance the protection of minorities. He stressed that international support should focus on housing reconstruction efforts and issues of social welfare as humanitarian agencies phased out. On coordination, the incoming Special Envoy stated that he would continue to coordinate the remaining humanitarian activities and would work closely with the United Nations Development Group focal point during the transition to development activities.

41. The Director of the South-Eastern Europe Operation commented that while there was enhanced interest in returns to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, there is a continued need to support reintegration activities. He stressed that these two issues are not mutually exclusive. The Director informed delegations that the new refugee registration exercise would give a better picture of refugees' wishes and numbers, and it was expected that many would opt to locally integrate. The Office looked forward to receiving support to monitor this registration, as well as the registration of internally displaced persons in Kosovo.

42. In summing up the debate, the Chairman paid tribute to the outgoing Special Envoy and noted the appreciation of all delegations for his valuable efforts over the past 15 months.

B. Global Report on Activities in 1999

43. Introducing the Global Report 1999, the Head of Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization (DRRM) commented briefly on its major features, notably those that were new.

44. Delegations expressed their general satisfaction with the Report, noting the improvements made and confirming that the Global Report, combined with the Global Appeal had become useful tools in their daily work. There was general agreement, however, on the need for a closer link between the objectives, strategy and the results achieved. In this context, several delegations asked for more information on outcomes and impact, with indicators on standards achieved. Some also invited UNHCR to be more

analytical and self-critical, providing information on activities that were not implemented and why. Focusing on UNHCR's policy priorities, a number of delegations also asked for more detailed data in future, including disaggregated statistics.

45. The Head of DRRM noted these various suggestions, observing that some could be given effect quite rapidly, while others would require further discussion and adjustments.

VI. PROTECTION/PROGRAMME POLICY

A. Social and Economic Impact of Massive Refugee Populations on Host Developing Countries, as well as Other Countries

46. The conference room paper entitled *Social and Economic Impact of Massive Refugee Populations on Host Developing Countries, as well as Other Countries* (EC/50/SC/CRP.21) was introduced by the Director a.i. of the Division of Operational Support. In his presentation, he recalled the issue's complexity and multifaceted dimension.

47. A number of delegations acknowledged the generosity of host countries, emphasizing that this must not be taken for granted. They stressed that if such generosity was taken for granted and not supported, it could have detrimental effects for the quality of asylum in the future. Delegations called for international solidarity and burden-sharing, through complementary instruments, to be ensured in this respect.

48. The majority of delegations supported the approach proposed by UNHCR in the paper, namely that because of its mandate, it is difficult for UNHCR to address the diversion of developmental resources. Solutions within a broader and more appropriate framework should therefore be pursued, with UNHCR playing a catalytic and advocacy role; for instance, in strongly encouraging host countries to place this important issue on their development agendas.

49. UNHCR was encouraged to further promote the Brookings Process model. In addition, the Office's advocacy role in the context of the forthcoming conference on least developed countries was appreciated by a number of delegations. One delegation suggested that UNHCR's advocacy role should not just be on least developed countries, but rather on all countries hosting refugees. Several delegations recognized the importance of UNHCR playing a more active role in the CCA/UNDAF process. It was also stressed that the Office's catalytic role in the country-driven process requires further elaboration.

50. Delegations were also of the view that UNHCR should increase its efforts to mobilize resources required to address the rehabilitation needs of refugee-affected areas. For their part, several delegations stated that they also needed to further examine their own involvement in "bridging the gap", especially regarding possibilities for providing funding from different budget sources. In addition, it was felt that there is still a need for more innovative approaches and that voluntary repatriation should remain the preferred durable solution. UNHCR was encouraged to play a more active role to facilitate this through the design of its country plans. It was proposed that this issue should remain on the agenda of the Standing Committee.

B. Safety and Security of Staff and The Security, Civilian and Humanitarian Character of Refugee Camps and Settlement

51. The Assistant High Commissioner first introduced an update on issues relating to the safety and security of staff (EC/50/SC/INF.3), recalling the responsibility of States in this area. He outlined a number of efforts recently undertaken or underway to reinforce staff safety through strengthening the legal framework, ensuring a more effective response at operational level, and reinforcing institutional arrangements through the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD). On the broader issue of the security, civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements, he drew attention to efforts to operationalize the "ladder of options", as defined in the information note EC/50/SC/INF.4. Here the focus was on preventive action, with proposed new stand-by arrangements with governments, and with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO).

52. In a statement on staff security to the Standing Committee, the representative of WFP confirmed that life-threatening incidents had become commonplace in many locations. It was not unusual for humanitarian staff to be deployed to areas where the military are not sent. He described the various measures undertaken by his organization to strengthen staff security, and emphasized the need to enhance the role of UNSECOORD.

53. In their statements, many delegations expressed strong concern over the increasing number of security incidents and support for the various proposals put forward in the information note EC/50/SC/INF.3. One delegation urged that the perpetrators of security incidents affecting staff must be brought to trial. Several delegations mentioned that their governments had now acceded to the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. The importance of interagency cooperation and of training was also acknowledged. Some delegations asked for greater clarity with respect to reporting on costs in all budget and other relevant documents.

54. There was also general support for the various proposals put forward with respect to the security of refugee camps and settlements. One delegation regretted, however, that the two subjects were not treated separately, since one (staff security) was a management issue, while the other related to protection. Several delegations made reference in their statements to existing standby arrangements with governments, welcoming the new proposals, as well as the proposed arrangement with DPKO on which the Committee wished to be kept informed. One delegation recommended giving priority to the security needs of the elderly. Another delegation gave an account of a workshop hosted by its government on the potential role of international police in refugee camp security, and of the recommendations that had emerged with respect to the guidelines being issued by DPKO for civilian police, and to the middle range of the "ladder of options" proposed by UNHCR. In a statement on behalf of the NGOs, attention was drawn to the interdependence of the needs and efforts of all humanitarian agencies in the field with respect to security, calling for consultation and partnership. Reference was made in this context to the work of the Task Force of the Inter Agency Standing Committee Working Group, which was looking at cooperation between the United Nations and NGOs on security matters.

55. Responding to questions and observations raised by delegations, the Assistant High Commissioner first expressed appreciation for their support.

He insisted that it was vital for all humanitarian staff to benefit from the provisions of the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, and that this could only be achieved through the adoption of a Protocol.

56. Details were also provided by the Head of Field Safety Section on cost-sharing arrangements as applied by UNSECOORD and on a proposed training initiative aimed at achieving a coordinated response to hostage-taking which recent events had revealed as a need.

VII. COORDINATION

57. In a brief presentation, the Head of Secretariat and Inter-Organization Service referred to main developments since the Standing Committee's seventeenth meeting, as summarized in a note describing recent activities of various interagency bodies. This drew particular attention to the work of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the Executive Committee on Peace and Security and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs. She also mentioned ongoing preparations for the humanitarian segment of the Economic and Social Council, scheduled to take place later in the month. Among other events of interest, she drew special attention to the recent annual high-level meeting between UNHCR and ICRC, which had analysed the complementary roles and responsibilities of the two agencies, particularly in the area of protection and assistance to internally displaced persons, using the situations in Angola, Sri Lanka and Colombia as specific examples.

VIII. GOVERNANCE

58. The Standing Committee gave final consideration to the annual theme for the fifty-first session of the Executive Committee, basing its discussion on a draft decision made available to delegations. The decision on the theme of "UNHCR@50: from response to solutions" was adopted (Annex).

IX. MANAGEMENT, FINANCE, OVERSIGHT AND HUMAN RESOURCES

59. In view of the limited time available, the Committee endorsed the proposal of the Chairman to postpone consideration of UNHCR's follow-on actions taken to implement the recommendations of the Board of Auditors in its report for the year ended 31 December 1998, contained in conference room paper EC/50/SC/CRP.20. It decided to add this item to the agenda of its nineteenth meeting, to take place in September 2000.

X. STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE UNHCR STAFF COUNCIL

60. In a statement to the Committee on behalf of the staff of UNHCR, the Chairman of the Staff Council conveyed a number of staff concerns, notably the various problems experienced in implementing the new human resource policies. He also welcomed the discussion on staff safety that had taken place at the meeting. Other issues causing concern to the staff included the Office's rotation policy which was to be the subject of careful review, as well as the situation of local staff.

61. Some delegations expressed their appreciation for the statement on behalf of the staff, noting that a good working climate was of crucial importance for the effectiveness of the organization.

XI. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

62. There being no further business, the Chairman adjourned the meeting.

DECISIONS ADOPTED BY THE EIGHTEENTH STANDING COMMITTEE

A. DECISION ON MOBILIZING RESOURCES FOR A UNIFIED BUDGET: THE PLEDGING CONFERENCE (Item 4(i)(a))

The Standing Committee,

Noting the information relating to the Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly for the Announcement of Voluntary Contributions to the Programmes of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, contained in document EC/50/SC/CRP.14, examined by the Standing Committee at its 18th meeting,

Noting in particular the proposals it contains aimed at strengthening the dialogue between UNHCR and donors on resource mobilization within the context of the unified budget,

Welcoming the informal consultations that accompany the preparation of the budget for the next financial year, prior to its approval at the annual session of the Executive Committee,

1. *Requests* UNHCR to convene in Geneva a separate meeting of donors to consider the funding of the budget following its approval by the Executive Committee;

2. *Requests* UNHCR to make arrangements to allow United Nations members, observers and other donors to announce pledges at the meeting in early December, in Geneva, that serves to launch the Global Appeal for the coming year;

3. *Requests* the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme to propose to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly that a review of the pledging mechanism be undertaken as soon as possible by the Fifth Committee, in the light of experience gained through the alternative pledging arrangement outlined above.

B. GUIDING PRINCIPLES APPLICABLE TO THE RESOURCING OF UNHCR'S UNIFIED BUDGET

The Standing Committee,

Welcoming the introduction of UNHCR's Global Appeal, Global Report and Mid-Year Progress Report,

Noting that UNHCR is dependent for 98 per cent of its requirements on voluntary funding,

Stressing that direct financial support is not the only support to the work of UNHCR for refugees and other persons of concern, but that significant

contributions provided by countries that host refugee populations should also be taken into consideration,

Recognizing that governments are the major donors, and that the current donor base is relatively narrow,

Noting that donors do not at present follow a standard pattern in making their contributions to UNHCR,

Noting further that the tendency to earmark funds has become more prominent in recent years,

Welcoming the recent introduction of a unified budget, combining General Programmes and Special Programmes, and the specification of support costs under Programme Support and Management and Administration, for the purpose of ensuring greater flexibility in the use of available resources as well as increased transparency in the use of funds, in line with the harmonization of budget structures within the United Nations system,

Acknowledging that the recent introduction of the unified budget calls for a common understanding of and approach to the funding of UNHCR's activities,

1. *Recognizes* and *supports* the following general principles:

(a) The desirability of full resourcing and implementation of the Annual Programme Budget, as approved by the Executive Committee;

(b) The importance of consultations between UNHCR and Executive Committee members to establish clear prioritization throughout the Annual Programme Budget cycle, and according to its mandate;

(c) The prerogative of donors to maintain certain general priorities in their support for UNHCR's activities;

(d) The importance of respecting and supporting the multilateral nature of UNHCR's mandate;

(e) The importance for UNHCR of being able to predict when contributions will be received, in order to plan and implement programmes approved by the Executive Committee;

(f) The importance for UNHCR to have adequate flexibility in the use of the funds made available, to allow it to meet established operational priorities;

(g) The need for adequate unearmarked contributions and/or adequate earmarked contributions for both Global Operations and Headquarters, to establish such flexibility;

(h) The need for equitable sharing, among donors, of resourcing both Global Operations and Headquarters;

(i) The desirability for donors to avoid:

(i) Earmarking below country level;

(ii) Concentration of earmarking on specific and visible activities or situations, both geographically and in given sectors;

(iii) Earmarking that diverges from the activities within the Annual Programme Budget, as well as timeframes that are at variance with the annual cycle of UNHCR's programmes;

(j) The need for UNHCR, in cases where such earmarkings cannot be avoided, to invite donors to consider meeting the cost of additional administrative work involved in implementing their contribution;

(k) The usefulness of the Global Report and Mid-Year Report in providing donors with the information they require on the use of their contributions, on the understanding that any additional reporting requirements by donors should be brought to UNHCR's attention in a timely fashion, and an agreement reached on specific arrangements to address such requirements, including possible resources required;

(l) The usefulness of regular consultations to address problems related to resource mobilization, including those at multilateral level, as part of efforts to maintain full transparency on all budgetary issues;

(m) The necessity for UNHCR to make every effort to expand its donor base;

2. *Takes note* of the above general principles applicable to the resourcing of UNHCR's unified budget, and requests UNHCR and donors to explore appropriate measures for the implementation of these principles.

C. DECISION ON THE ANNUAL THEME OF THE FIFTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Standing Committee,

Recalling the decision taken at the forty-sixth session of the Executive Committee discontinuing the General Debate and replacing it with a debate on a focussed annual theme to be selected in consultation with the High Commissioner and the Standing Committee at a meeting held at least three months before the annual plenary session (A/AC.96/860, para. 32(h)),

Recalling that, based on a decision by the Standing Committee of the Executive Committee at its fifteenth meeting, the annual theme of the fiftieth session of the Executive Committee was "Strengthening partnership to ensure protection, also in relation to security",

1. *Decides* that the annual theme of the fifty-first session of the Executive Committee, which falls in the year of UNHCR's fiftieth anniversary, will be "UNHCR@50: from response to solutions";

2. *Considers* that the debate on the annual theme should be conducted *inter alia* on the basis of relevant work undertaken at inter-sessional meetings of the Standing Committee, including in respect of international protection, as well as of previous decisions and conclusions of the Executive Committee and other relevant documents or studies.